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PERSONAL HAPPINESS VS. COMMUNAL/EUROPEAN WELFARE – ONTOLOGICAL INCONGRUENCE, PARALLELISM, OR CONGRUENCE ?

Petru Stefaroi

Abstract : *The article explores. philosophically (ontologically), a central question of our time: why doesn't material prosperity guarantee authentic happiness? The proposed answer suggests that true happiness is not only normative but also ontological. Even with strong institutions and economic abundance, if there's no ontological resonance between the individual's inner self (personal ontos) and the community's deeper essence (communal ontos), alienation arises. The article contrasts the normative (measurable by indicators like GDP) with the ontological (the lived, existential experience). It concludes that the European project should not be seen merely as an institutional welfare structure, but as a space of human coexistence where* ***Being*** *confronts and seeks its original unity/congruence, a place where man (the personal being) rediscovers – invoking the well-known Levinasian motif – his "face" in the community (the collective being), and the community (Europe) models itself after the image and ontology of man (the European).*

Key-words: ***Authentic Happiness*** *(A profound state of inner integrity, unity, centeredness, and ontological harmony – not to be confused with superficial pleasure or material well-being);* ***Personal Ontos*** *(The totality of inner ontological formations – biological, affective, noetic, projective-volitional, and spiritual; the full, real interior existence of the human being);* ***Communal/ Community Ontos*** *(The real, living, and integral existence of a collective, as manifested in the lived experiences of its members and in its authentic-existential mode of functioning);* ***Normative Dimension*** *(The official, institutional, and regulatory framework of a society);* ***Ontological Dimension*** *(The authentic and real inner experience of human and communal being);* ***Onto-Personal Union*** *(The process of integration and harmonization of the multiple inner ontological formations of the individual);* ***Onto-Communal Union*** *(The process of integration and harmonization of the multiple inner ontological formations of the community);* ***Ontological Congruence*** *between Individual and Community (The harmonious alignment between the personal ontos and the communal ontos – a fundamental precondition for authentic happiness).*

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INTRODUCTION

As the European Union increasingly presents itself as a space of well-being, establishing itself as a political, institutional, and economic construct, a profound question becomes relevant: does community well-being also mean or guarantee personal happiness? The answer requires a crucial distinction between two planes: the **normative**, defined by laws, institutions, and indicators of prosperity, and the **ontological**, which refers to the intimate experience of being, to inner harmony and existential meaning. The fact that a community is prosperous, functional, and stable does not, in itself, guarantee "authentic and resilient happiness," because under the pressing dome of disengaging prosperity, institutionalization, and normativity, individuals may feel a profound lack of their own existential meaning, fulfillment, and integration, of authentic happiness.

This aspect is also visible in statistical data: indicators such as GDP per capita, the Human Development Index (HDI), or the Gini coefficient describe the normative dimension of well-being, but surveys like the Eurobarometer or the World Happiness Report reveal that the subjective level of happiness does not always correspond to these standards. Thus, we have a tension between the "normative good" and "ontological happiness." This tension opens up three possibilities: a relationship of **ontological incongruity**, when normative structures and the needs of being are antagonistic; of **ontological parallelism**, when the two planes coexist without influencing each other; or of **ontological congruity**, when community well-being and personal happiness are mutually supportive, reflecting the harmony between the individual's interiority and the community's architecture. Some authoritative voices claim that although European values proclaim the centrality and happiness of the individual, many citizens feel unhappy, estranged from their communities or from the European project. This fissure is not merely political or social – it is ontological, revealing the rupture between the normative and the ontological, between the external rules of coexistence and the internal search for existential meaning.

Therefore, this article proposes a philosophical-existential discussion on the idea that authentic and resilient happiness does not automatically result from the person's inner harmony, nor from the normative organization of the community, but from the ontological harmony/congruity between the individual and the collective, as well as between the normative and ontological planes.

Within this framework, the article uses the concept of **"personal ontos"** to denote the inner complexity/existence of the individual, an "ontological multiple" of antagonistic beings in the process of integration; in parallel, **"community ontos"** denotes the way a collective can function as an intra-conflictual "ontological organism" capable, or not, of supporting the happiness of its members. The thesis speculates that authentic and resilient happiness becomes possible only through an ontological congruity between the individual and the community – a deep alignment between the interior of the being and the collective architecture/being. Only in this harmony, which transcends the purely normative level, can what we call "resilient and authentic happiness" emerge.

The article also continues ideas and content from several of our previous works and brings back into focus the concepts of "personal ontos" and "community ontos," conditioning and linking authentic and resilient happiness to their internal unity and coherence, as well as to the ontological congruity between these two existential poles, by no means identifiable with simple and fleeting pleasure, which is highly dependent on material well-being.

PLEASURE, AN ELEMENT, HAPPINESS, A WHOLE

To grasp the logic of happiness, we must first understand what it is not. In philosophical tradition, happiness has often been mistakenly equated with pleasure. For ancient hedonism, represented by Aristippus of Cyrene and later by Epicurus, happiness was defined as the accumulation or balance of pleasures. This confusion risks blocking any serious reflection on human nature. Reducing happiness to a mere succession of pleasant moments is like mistaking a complex mosaic for a single piece of colored glass: beautiful in itself, but incapable of representing the whole. Pleasure is transient, localized, and dependent on external stimuli. It can even appear in an internally imbalanced person, amidst anxiety or turmoil.

From an ontological perspective, pleasure lacks the power of integration; it remains a fragment of sensory intensity, an "island" in the often-restless ocean of being. In contrast to hedonism, the Aristotelian tradition – through the concept of **eudaimonia** – emphasized that happiness is a state of global fulfillment, dependent on the actualization of human potential and a virtuous life. The Stoics further deepened this idea, arguing that happiness derives from harmony with universal reason and independence from external circumstances. In modernity, utilitarians like Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill brought the link between pleasure and the good back into focus, but in a calculative manner, reducing the complexity of human experience to a sum of intensities.

Contemporary positive psychology distinguishes between "hedonic pleasure" and "eudaimonic happiness," emphasizing the role of meaning and personal integration. Following this line, happiness is not reduced to isolated islands of pleasure; rather, it constitutes a coherent configuration of the entire being. It presumes harmony among a person's biological, affective, rational, volitional, and spiritual components – a "structural effect," not a simple reaction to stimuli. Pleasure can be obtained in the absence of inner balance, through consumption, entertainment, or escapism, but happiness is impossible without a systemic order of the self. It depends on how the "pieces" of being work together.

At the community level, this distinction is equally important. A society focused on providing pleasures – through accelerated consumption or constant entertainment – can produce stimulated individuals, but not necessarily happy ones. The repetition and multiplication of pleasures do not automatically generate happiness; on the contrary, they can undermine inner unity and a sense of meaning if not integrated into a coherent life. The question thus becomes: what kind of being is capable of happiness? The answer leads us to the concept of the **personal ontos** – the plural inner space where multiple ontological instances coexist, each with its own needs and directions. Understanding happiness requires mapping this inner geography and exploring how it can achieve integration and coherence.

THE PERSONAL ONTOS, THE INTERNAL ONTOLOGICAL/ONTOGENETIC WAR, AND THE PATH TO ONTO-PERSONAL UNION – A PREMISE FOR HAPPINESS

To understand how happiness is born or how it collapses, we must enter the intimate ontological architecture of the person. There, we do not encounter a homogeneous unity, but a plurality of inner beings – an existential battlefield, a living whole composed of divergent or even antagonistic forces, desires, and impulses. From this perspective, the personal being is not an inner monolith but a multiple of entities – a space inhabited by several autonomous onto-formations, a constellation of forces that coexist, sometimes collaborate, but are mostly in confrontation. After undergoing ontification through stages such as contact, acquisition, structuring, and institutionalization, each inner ontos operates according to its own existential logic, its own time and meaning, with its own desires and a profound need to dominate and influence the personal identity and inner economy, as well as its relationships with the environment and with others. A similar, though simplified, idea can be found in Maslow's writings on the hierarchy of needs and their tendency to assert themselves within the person's inner architecture.

The **biological ontos** is the foundation of being, sovereign of physical reality, expressing itself through hunger, fatigue, and touch – it is direct, imperative, and impossible to ignore without consequences. Neglected, it rebels; when absolutized, it reduces a person to a mechanism of raw pleasure. The body, as Merleau-Ponty argued, is not an object but the very structure of consciousness, and Damasio maintains that emotion and reason are rooted in the body. The **affective ontos**, centered on experience and connection, demands validation and relational meaning. When ignored, it causes inner suffering and chaos; when exaggerated, it becomes perpetual drama. Emotions, in Sartre's view, are ways of being in the world, not just reactions, and Ekman's studies underscore the profound interaction between affect and body. The **noetic ontos** of thought seeks meaning, order, and coherence. It is the reason that mediates between body, emotion, and will. When unbalanced, it becomes cold and rigid. Frankl saw in it the guide to meaning, and Kant – the architect of reality and morality. The **projective-volitional ontos** is the force that plans, decides, and acts. When it becomes authoritarian, it stifles affect and the body, but when balanced, it provides direction and autonomy. Nietzsche saw it as the will to power, the impulse to become more. At its deepest, the **spiritual ontos** orients the being toward meaning, transcendence, and value. It is not merely religious, but a vector of inner integration. It can harmonize the other instances, but if it becomes tyrannical, it leads to alienation and self-denial. Kierkegaard saw in this dimension the path to authenticity.

The interactions between these onto-formations often unfold more like a battlefield than an orchestra. The biological ontos can demand dominance when hunger or pain requires immediate satisfaction; emotions sense the tension and react with anxiety or frustration, amplifying the conflict. Reason tries to temper these tensions and prioritize actions based on long-term goals, but if it is undermined, it retreats or enters into an indirect conflict, generating self-criticism and decisional paralysis. The

volitional ontos intervenes to channel the energy, trying to transform desires into concrete action, but left unchecked, it can suppress the body and emotions, leading to acute internal tensions. The spiritual ontos, as the highest, tries to mitigate these tensions. Authentic happiness appears when the entire personal ontos functions as an orchestra. In this orchestra, the strings (the body) demand immediate attention, the brass (emotions) impose intensity, the percussion (the will) dictates the tempo of action, and the conductor (the spiritual self) tries to harmonize it all. True happiness emerges when each ontos contributes without dictatorially imposing its role, and internal conflicts become conversations, constructive connections, thus prefiguring the project of an onto-personal union. Just as Europe was reimagined – after a turbulent history of wars and discord – as a union of differences, the human being can be reorganized by harmonizing its inner diversity. Happiness is born from such governance. It is not the result of a victorious part, but of the **synergy between all**.

Achieving this requires several conditions: **Integrality**, which means accepting all parts as legitimate, ensuring nothing – neither body, emotion, thought, will, nor spirit – is excluded; **Unity and Coherence**, a flexible and adaptable coherence that remains faithful to the whole; and **Functional Centrality**, the capacity to allow one instance or another to dominate and lead, when appropriate, without absolutizing its role.

Ontological union is not an abstract ideal but a real possibility that does not imply perfection but maturation. Happiness thus becomes a consequence of ontological convergence: the internal war diminishes its virulence, and the being functions as a living whole. In a mirror reflection, the European Union can be seen not only as a political project but also as a living metaphor for a being learning to become whole.

THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ONTOS: FROM A FRAGMENTED, INTRA-CONFLICTUAL EUROPE TOWARDS A UNITED AND HUMAN EUROPE – OTHER PREMISE FOR HAPPINESS

Just as the human being is made up of multiple inner onto-formations – biological, affective, noetic/rational, projective-volitional, and spiritual – any human community is also constituted by roughly the same dimensions. Each community, however, has a dominant ontological orientation, which is not a simple social or cultural label but an ontological expression of a deep structure, a distinct way of being and representing the world. When these components coexist without a common architecture, the result is a dissonant community, marked by internal tensions and conflicts. Just like an internally fragmented individual who lacks coherent internal governance, communities can go through long periods of misunderstanding and rivalry. In the evolution of personal ontology, the period of fragmentation and internal conflicts usually precedes the maturation, integration, and unification of the being, which are fundamental conditions for the emergence of authentic happiness. Analogously, Europe’s warring and conflictual history, marked by territorial and cultural rivalries, was followed by processes of organization, harmonization, and cohesion, leading to a unified Europe capable of sustaining the well-being and integral development of its members. This represents a reintegration of the community “being,” similar to the integration and harmonization of personal ontology.

Europe can be understood as a complex, large-scale community composed of a multitude of nations, regions, and cultures, each with its own ontological dominant. The European experience shows how a large and diverse collective can transform fragmentation and intra-community tensions – often generated by conflictual history, territorial rivalries, and cultural antagonisms – into functionality, cohesion, and well-being. Each geographical and cultural area of Europe expresses an ontological dominant that corresponds to one of the dimensions of being.

Thus, Italy and Southern Portugal can be likened to the person's **biological ontos**, reflecting an intrinsic value placed on vitality and bodily experience, translated into the joy of living and savoring the moment. This profound structure, based on a deeply rooted sense of identity, is supported by thinkers like Anthony D. Smith, who emphasizes how nations are built on ethnic foundations where the body and territory are essential.

On the other hand, Spain and the Balkans manifest as the continent's **affective/ emotional ontos,** through collective emotion influenced by historical traumas and rivalries. Jeffrey C. Alexander highlights how historical events and collective memory emotionally shape social cohesion, explaining the often volatile and dramatic dynamics of these regions.

Germany, the Nordic countries, and, in part, Great Britain can be likened to the **noetic/rational ontos**, characterized by rationality, efficiency, consensus, and legal tradition. Max Weber, in his analyses, argued that instrumental rationality and bureaucratic organization are the driving forces of these societies, essential for understanding their social structures.

At the same time, France and Benelux suggest a correspondence with the **projective-volitional ontos**, oriented toward civic action and institutional dynamics, a vision that resonates with John Dewey's ideas about transformative action that restructures social hierarchies.

Finally, Greece, Romania, and parts of Central and Eastern Europe can be called the continent's **"spiritual ontos,"** dominated by a strong sense of traditions and historical memory. Mircea Eliade explored the sacredness of the sky, time, and space, providing a framework for understanding this ontological dominant in these areas where spirituality is essential.

Nevertheless, even within this harmonious diversity, conflicts and incongruities persist. Historical rivalries, economic tensions, and differences in vision are constantly present. This often tense dynamic has led to a deeper understanding that simple coexistence is not enough to ensure lasting stability and prosperity. From this reasoning, the project of an **onto-community/European union** was born. Well-being and happiness are the result of this organization, which is not the triumph of one part but the synergy of all. To achieve this harmony, three essential conditions are necessary: integrality, unity, and centrality.

An authentic community, like a fulfilled human being, becomes whole only when it accepts **integrality** – the recognition and valuing of all its dimensions, from the vital force of instincts to the calls of the spirit. This integrality does not mean confusion, but a living **unity**, a flexible coherence that is faithful to the whole while respecting differences. Such a community rejects rigidity and standardization, preferring to move organically. At its heart pulses a functional and adaptable **centrality**, where, depending on the context, leadership is transferred – sometimes reason takes the helm to manage crises, other times emotion or the spiritual self sets the direction. This dynamic represents an art of balance,

not a power struggle, allowing a community to be born that lives profoundly, as a whole.

Even if Europe has achieved a high level of well-being, organization, and functionality, these do not automatically guarantee personal happiness. The major challenge is to achieve an **ontological congruity** between the **community ontos** and the **personal one**, so that each individual finds harmony between their inner ontological constitution and the collective one.

AUTHENTIC AND RESILIENT HAPPINESS – THE RESULT OF ONTOLOGICAL CONGRUENCE: PERSON – COMMUNITY (PERSONAL ONTOS – COMMUNAL/COMMUNITY ONTOS)

Authentic and resilient happiness involves a deep harmony not only internally but also a real **ontological congruence** between the individual and their environment. A person's internal balance, often seen as a supreme goal, becomes vulnerable without a resonance with the community's internal ontology. This integration of self and world aligns with the Aristotelian idea of happiness (*eudaimonia*) as a fulfilled life within the *polis*, where the individual good is inseparable from the communal good. The absence of this congruence leads to a deep suffering we can call **ontological incongruence** – an acute conflict between a person's essence and what they are required to be to belong.

An individual with a deeply spiritual orientation, concerned with meaning and contemplation, can feel profoundly alienated in a hyper-technological and materialistic context. This displacement of being is, **to a certain extent**, related to the "de-centering" of the self in the face of nihilism, a central theme for Martin Heidegger. The lack of a legitimate space for these essential quests creates an ontological rift, not just a lifestyle difference, between a person's core identity and their surroundings. Likewise, an empathetic person will feel a painful distance in an overly rationalized community where efficiency has replaced affection. Conversely, a highly analytical person may be frustrated in an environment governed by unfiltered emotions. This phenomenon echoes Wilhelm Dilthey's concept of *Lebenszusammenhang*, which emphasizes the need for coherence between individual experience and the historical and cultural context of life. In humanist personology, the human being is a complex system of internal onto-formations (biological, affective, noetic, volitional, and spiritual) that needs an environment to validate its deep ontological structure to achieve well-being and authentic expression.

This principle of congruence extends to the European continent. The freedom of movement in contemporary Europe has a profound ontological dimension. Millions of Europeans are moving not just for economic reasons, but in search of a place that reflects and supports their inner ontic structure. Individuals with a dominant spiritual ontos seek sacred or secluded places, while those with a rational dominant gravitate towards organized, meritocratic cities. These choices are, in essence, a search for an **"ontological home,"** a place where their being can breathe and flourish. This ontological migration is a manifestation of the quest for congruence, which is essential for happiness and onto-personal fulfillment.

Authentic and resilient happiness, therefore, is not a fleeting emotion but the result of a living ontological agreement between who we are and

the world we live in. Without this compatibility, even a well-organized and prosperous community is unable to generate genuine happiness for its members. The idea is, **in a way**, reflected in Søren Kierkegaard, who emphasized the role of subjective choice in building an existential meaning within the community. A functional and prosperous Europe is not enough; it becomes fertile ground for authentic happiness and personal fulfillment only when it respects and supports the ontological diversity of its people. Happiness is not achieved through homogenization but through the deep harmony between the personal being and the communal being. Well-being and organization can create the framework, but they cannot guarantee happiness on their own. It arises only where there is **ontological consonance**, where a person is not forced to abandon their true self to belong but develops within an authentic belonging that recognizes their nature and values their inner resources. In philosophical-ontological terms, authentic and resilient happiness endures because it is rooted in the harmony between the personal being and the communal being.

SOME CONCLUDING REMARKS

In light of the reflections presented, we can state that **authentic and resilient happiness** is neither a simple effect of economic prosperity nor a spontaneous emanation of a life institutionalized within an efficient normative system. It cannot be reduced to pleasure, nor to individual success or material comfort. As the proposed ontological analysis shows, happiness is the result of a double harmony: the **inner unity of the human being** (**onto-personal union**) and the **profound congruence between this being and the community** in which they live (**onto-communal union**).

This perspective implies a paradigm shift: instead of an exclusive focus on norms, rules, and quantitative indicators, a reorientation toward the **relational ontology** of human and communal existence is necessary. True European well-being cannot be conceived without integrating the **ontological dimension** of being – of both the individual and the collective being. In this context, the European project must be reimagined not just as a political-administrative system, but as a **community of beings**, where human interiority finds a space for affirmation, coherence, and resonance.

Ontological congruence between the individual and the community thus emerges as a prerequisite for authentic happiness. In the absence of this congruence, any system – no matter how institutionally effective – risks becoming alienating, and the individual, no matter how well-adapted externally, remains internally estranged. Being can dissolve into a meaningless life, into a "normal" that doesn't heal, but rather alienates.

In conclusion, the answer to the question of whether there is incongruence, parallelism, or congruence between personal happiness and communal well-being depends not on the institutional structure itself, but on the **ontological quality of the relationship between the individual and the community**. Only where the human being is respected in their complexity and the community is conceived as a living space of coexistence can **authentic and resilient happiness** emerge.

Thus – I believe we can assert together – the European community project must be understood not only – in a normative logic – as an

institutional construct neutrally centered on well-being, but also as a **human-ontological framework of coexistence** where **Being – in the subsequence of the cosmic imperative of man and humanity –** seeks and finds its original unity/congruence, a place where man (**the personal being**) rediscovers – invoking the well-known Levinasian motif – his "face" in the community (**the collective being**), and the community (**Europe**) models itself after the face and ontology of man (the European).